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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1035
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001153

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2016

TAGS: ASEC KPAL IS
SUBJECT: JOB-SEEKING MILITANTS ATTACK PA OFFICIALS, OFFICES
IN GAZA

REF: JERUSALEM 1119

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: A series of intense gun battles erupted on March 20 in Gaza between armed gunmen and Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF). During the fracas, Civil Police Chief BG Ala'a Husni's motorcade was attacked and at least twelve people were injured. PA Ministry of Interior (MOI) officials told Poloff that Fatah-affiliated militants are increasingly difficult to control due to the PA's inability to provide paying jobs. END SUMMARY.

A Violent Day In Gaza

¶12. (C) Pitched battles erupted in Gaza at 0930L on March 20 when a group of masked gunmen opened fire at Palestinian Civil Policemen on Salahadeen Street in Gaza City. Two officers and at least three civilians were injured in the attack. Masked gunmen opened fire shortly afterwards on Civil Police Chief BG Ala'a Husni's motorcade at 1020L as it departed Gaza City to pick him up at Erez/Beit Hanoun Crossing. While the Civil Police chief had not yet joined the motorcade, two of Husni's bodyguards were wounded in the attack.

¶13. (C) Following the attack on Ala'a Husni's motorcade, violence broke out in other parts of Gaza. Policemen rioted at Balsam and Shifa hospitals as they arrived with their wounded colleagues. Media reported that several policemen began firing indiscriminately and blocking off roads surrounding the hospitals. At 1130L, several PA buildings were simultaneously attacked by organized groups of masked gunmen, who General Intelligence (Mukhabarat) and Interior Ministry officials have reported are affiliated with the Ahmad Abu al-Arish and Hatem al-Ashqar factions of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (AMB). Elements of the Civil Police, Mukhabarat, and National Security Forces (NSF) engaged the AMB militants and attempted to prevent them from occupying the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Khan Yunis District Court and an electricity substation north of Nuseirat refugee camp. A total of 12 people were wounded in the clashes.

Unemployed AMB Militants
Behind Gaza Unrest

¶14. (C) AMB militants used the publicity resulting from the March 20 attacks to issue statements demanding jobs and threatening further unrest if their demands went unanswered.

MOI Director General Ibrahim Salamah told Poloff during a March 21 telcon that AMB militants are &very angry8 because the PA can no longer provide them with jobs on the security payroll or protection from IDF attack or arrest (reftel).

HAMAS Government Could
Lead to Escalation

¶5. (C) Mukhabarat contacts emphasized to POL FSN that incidents such as the March 20 violence in Gaza may become more pronounced after the formation of the new PA government. HAMAS may be unable or unwilling to &handle the Fatah militants softly,8 i.e. by co-opting them, because of the new government,s ideological differences and likely financial woes.

WALLES